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LETTER DATED 8 JULY 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you the text of an article published in The Sunday Telegraph on 13 April 1997, entitled "US Hounds Accusers over Claims of Lockerbie Crash Cover-up".

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a Security Council document.

(Signed) Abuzed Omar DORDA
Permanent Representative

Annex

The Sunday Telegraph
13 April 1997
Ambrose Evans-Pritchard

US HOUNDS ACCUSERS OVER CLAIMS OF LOCKERBIE CRASH COVER-UP

"The US Justice Department appears to be waging a campaign of persecution against those who have challenged the official explanation of the Lockerbie disaster. The FBI has used its immense power to sift through the background of whistle-blowers, investigators, and their employers, searching for vulnerabilities that could be exploited in a criminal prosecution.

The chief targets have been those who allege the bombing of Pan Am 103, which took 270 lives on Dec 22, 1988, was an Iranian-Syrian plot that exploited a security breach in a bungled CIA operation.

The US government says this is a conspiracy theory cooked up by the US Aviation Insurance Group (USAIG), the underwriters for Pan Am, to try to avoid liability for up to $500 million in damages for families of the victims. Both the US and British authorities insist the bombing was the work of Libyan terrorists.

Insurance disputes of this kind are typically adjudicated in civil court. But the Justice Department began an extremely aggressive criminal investigation of Pan Am's lawyers and insurers.

The investigation, begun in 1992, was unable to muster evidence of a conspiracy to obstruct justice in the Lockerbie case. But after broadening the scope of its inquiry the FBI managed to sustain a case of fraud against the former chairman of USAIG, John Brennan. This involved insurance claims over a 1987 crash of a USAir commuter plane. Brennan was convicted in July 1996. He is expected to be sentenced later this month. USAIG has accused the government of engaging in a malicious vendetta.

The Justice Department was less successful in its efforts to destroy Juval Aviv, an expert on terrorism employed by Pan Am's insurers to investigate the bombing. He was acquitted on federal charges of fraud last December after an ordeal lasting more than four years.

Aviv, head of a New York security firm, Interfor, was indicted in 1995 for supposedly defrauding a client, General Electric, in a minor security contract involving a fee of $20,683.

But General Electric had never issued a complaint. FBI agents nevertheless visited Aviv's clients demanding files. They were the same agents, Chris Murray and David Edward, who had conducted the Lockerbie investigation.

'The whole thing was obviously trumped up in revenge for his role in the Pan Am 103 disaster case,' said a juror afterwards.

Aviv has now filed a claim alleging malicious prosecution, violation of constitutional rights, and the launch of a campaign to discredit him 'in retaliation for his report to Pan Am'.

It was Aviv's report in 1989 that first sketched the outlines of a cover-up. He claimed a rogue CIA unit had allowed a Syrian drug ring to smuggle heroin on Pan Am flights from Frankfurt to New York. He said this was to gain help in the release of US hostages in Lebanon. But the operation was penetrated by Iranian-backed terrorists who exploited the Pan Am channel to plant a bomb on flight 103.

'Aviv stirred up a lot of trouble, playing on the emotions of the families,' said Vincent Cannistraro, former chief of counter-intelligence for the CIA. 'He goes around saying that he used to be a member of Mossad, but the office of the Israeli prime minister has written a letter denying it. The man's a fraud.'

But documents introduced at his trial paint a more complex picture. An internal FBI memo, marked secret, confirmed his 'past association with the Mossad'. Other documents corroborated his claim to have served as a security consultant to the FBI, Secret Service and other US agencies.

Aviv believes he was indicted in 1995 to destroy his credibility just as claims of a Lockerbie cover-up were gathering momentum.

A film that supported his theories, The Maltese Double Cross, was about to be shown in Britain for the first time. It was never broadcast, but families of the victims had a private screening.

The US embassy in London, joined by the Crown Office, went on the offensive, calling him a 'fabricator ... recently arrested in the US for defrauding an American company'.

The same treatment was meted out to another source for the film, Lester Coleman, who had worked for the US Defence Intelligence Agency. The embassy said he was 'a fugitive from justice, wanted in the US for perjury related to the Lockerbie case and for passport fraud'.

Coleman was indicted in 1993, four days before the British launch of his book, Trail of the Octopus - still unpublished in the US - confirming that the American government was indeed running 'controlled' heroin deliveries from Lebanon on Pan Am flights out of Frankfurt.

He returned to the US from exile in Sweden last year to clear his name and now awaits trial in New York.

The US government's actions clearly indicate something is amiss in the Lockerbie case. Fabricators are usually ignored, so perhaps it is time to pay close attention to the charges of Juval Aviv, Lester Coleman, and apostles of the 'Syrian Connection'."